United Nations E/CN.5/2002/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2001

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Fortieth session
11-21 February 2002
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Follow-up to the International Year of the Family in 2004

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Preparatory process for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004	3–19	2
	A. Commission for Social Development	3–4	2
	B. Economic and Social Council	5	2
	C. General Assembly	6	2
	D. Department of Economic and Social Affairs	7–19	3
III.	Basic approach to the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family	20–27	5
	A. National initiatives	22–25	5
	B. Regional and global initiatives	26–27	6
IV.	Summary and suggestions	28–29	6
Annex			
	Guidelines for the establishment of a national coordinating committee		9

* E/CN.5/2002/1.

01-68673 (E) 020102

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/6 of 24 July 2001. In that resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council on the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, at all levels. This report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of the Family" (E/CN.5/2001/4), which was submitted to the thirty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development.

2. The present interim report covers the period from February 2001 to December 2001 and is divided into two parts. The first section describes recent initiatives undertaken at the international level related to preparations for the observance of the anniversary in 2004. The second section describes the basic approach to observing the tenth anniversary at all levels and contains suggestions for follow-up actions. Preparatory measures of an organizational, programmatic, substantive and promotional nature are under way for the observance of the tenth anniversary at the national and regional levels. The report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-seventh General Assembly session will provide information in this regard.

II. Preparatory process for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

A. Commission for Social Development

3. The Commission for Social Development is responsible for reviewing annually the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family as part of its agenda and of its multi-year programme of work. At its thirty-ninth session held from 13 to 23 February 2001, the Commission reviewed the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/2001/4), which stated, inter alia, that special attention needs to be directed to strengthening national capacities for policy analysis, formulating of options and evaluation.

4. The Commission for Social Development recommended to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, a draft resolution entitled "Preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family" (E/CN.5/2001/L.6). By that resolution, Governments are urged to view 2004 as a target year by which concrete achievements should be made to identify and elaborate issues of direct concern to families and also to set up and strengthen, where appropriate, mechanisms to plan and coordinate activities of governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations. It invites Member States to consider organizing activities in preparation for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the national level. Moreover, during the deliberations of the Commission, various representatives of Governments expressed their concurrence with the basic philosophy and strategy for the tenth anniversary (see E/CN.5/2001/4). Also stressed was the necessity of fully integrating families and family concerns into broad socio-economic development strategies.[1]

B. Economic and Social Council

5. At its substantive session of 2001, the Economic and Social Council adopted the draft resolution recommended by the Commission for Social Development and recommended it for adoption by the General Assembly (resolution 2001/6). Many speakers[2] reaffirmed their support for the tenth anniversary and reaffirmed the pivotal role of families in society. They underlined the need to develop concrete and long-term policies and programmes for families.

C. General Assembly

6. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly had before it a note by the Secretary-General (A/56/57-E/2001/5) transmitting the report on the follow-up to the International Year of the Family (E/CN.5/2001/4). The Third Committee considered the draft resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption (see A/C.3/56/L.2) and the amendments proposed thereto (A/C.3/56/L.7). On the recommendation of the Committee (see A/56/572,

paras. 5-10 and 24), the General Assembly adopted the draft resolution as amended (resolution 56/113). In the resolution, the Assembly encouraged the regional commissions to participate in the preparatory process of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and to play an active role in facilitating regional cooperation in that regard. It requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the resolution and to include in the report a description of the state of preparations for the observance of the Year at all levels. The representatives of a number of Governments participated in the general discussion on the subject of the family and advocated strong support for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the Year in 2004.[3]

D. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

7. As the lead entity for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has initiated various actions directed at all levels. It has promoted the message that families are the economic and social engines of society and has highlighted the positive effects that families have on their respective societies through various reports, communications and meetings. In addition, the Department has made concerted efforts to promote the development of common ground and common understanding in constituencies viewing family issues from different perspectives.

8. The Department convened a consultative meeting on regional and global coordination in the promotion of social integration, held in New York from 1 to 5 October 2001. A basic aim of the meeting was to develop a focused approach to the preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004. Discussions centred on advocacy and promotion, and on research and technical cooperation activities. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Also present were a representative from the Department of Public Information and a representative of the Regional Commissions New York Office. At the meeting it was decided that:

(a) The regional commissions will hold informal consultations at the regional level with representatives of relevant United Nations bodies and organizations, and with regional and non-governmental organizations in order to exchange information and coordinate plans, as necessary, for the tenth anniversary;

(b) The regional commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will undertake a joint analytical study on major regional trends affecting families. They also agreed to exchange views on key research issues and identify priority topics and problems for in-depth analysis;

(c) Expert symposia/meetings should be promoted in order to exchange expertise and experiences within the context of the tenth anniversary.

9. The Department has initiated collaborative links with other United Nations organizations. Awareness of family issues is growing within the governing bodies of such United Nations organizations and bodies as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) has a cluster on Family and Community Health.

10. The Department, furthermore, has initiated consultations with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, the South Pacific Commission, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Nordic Council, and the League of Arab States. These intergovernmental organizations desire to promote family issues within their respective regions as well as play an advocacy role by raising the awareness of policy makers at the highest levels. They also acknowledge the objectives established with

respect to the preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary.

11. The third United Nations consultative meeting of regional and international non-governmental organizations on the family, organized by the Secretariat, was held on 9 February 2001 in New York, in conjunction with the thirty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development. It was attended by seven international non-governmental organizations[4] whose representatives reported on their various activities and programmes in the area of the family. They exchanged information on activities already planned in 2001. The overviews presented highlighted the importance of the objectives of the International Year of the Family. Reference was made to major family concerns that these organizations share, such as parent education, migration, family policies, capacity-building, HIV/AIDS and family legislation. The meeting endorsed the work of the Programme on the Family and welcomed and recognized the importance of developing a culture of partnership with respect to the observance of the anniversary.

12. The Department views international non-governmental organizations as major partners. The efforts by individual non-governmental organizations and family-related committees within non-governmental organizations in New York, Vienna, Paris and Kuala Lumpur have been valuable at this stage, the preparatory phase. Ongoing communication is maintained with a number of other such non-governmental organizations in order to engage them in the preparations for the anniversary.[5]

13. In addition, in line with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 54/124 of 17 December 1999, an inter-university network has been established to encourage more research, the dissemination of knowledge and increased cooperation between institutions of higher learning with regard to family policy development. Research activities that focus on seven main substantive themes are encouraged: approaches to family policy development; technology and its impact on the family; statistics and indicators for family well-being; HIV/AIDS and its impact on families; retirement and its implications for families; family businesses and their importance for economic development; and social functions of families in the areas of socialization and care-giving. Research results will be posted periodically on the web site of the Family Unit and made accessible via the Internet to the public, to other scholars and to policy makers. The current membership consists of universities in Austria, Canada, France, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, the Philippines, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Uruguay and the United States of America.

14. A major research activity geared to the tenth anniversary will be a policy study on major trends affecting families, to be undertaken in collaboration with the regional commissions by the end of 2003 (see paragraph 8). The aim is to identify regional trends that appear to have the greatest influence on families in their respective countries and to analyse their causes. Major trends include changes in family structures and smaller size households, delayed marriage and childbearing, increases in divorce rates and single parenthood, the rise of migration, demographic ageing, new technologies, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and globalization. To complement these forthcoming analyses, the Secretariat initiated three case studies on family issues in 2001, entitled (a) "The most affected HIV/AIDS families in selected countries"; (b) "Information and educational technology and its impact on families (Ireland and Malaysia)"; and (c) "Indicators and statistics for family well-being". The case studies encourage reflection on the types of strategies and policy options that can address current and emerging trends in the life conditions of families.

15. The Secretariat has continued to strengthen the consultative process with research and academic institutions. These consultations cover the topics of information exchange, organization of meetings, research and promotion of the observance of the tenth anniversary. For example, the National Council on Family Relations, which provides a forum for family researchers, educators, and practitioners to share in the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family relationships, has supported the observance of the tenth anniversary.[6] Possible areas of cooperation between the Department and the National Council on Family Relations include an expert group meeting, a publication covering issues pertaining to the tenth anniversary, the promotion of the International Day of Families through the National Council on Family Relations and the selection of the theme of the tenth anniversary for one of their upcoming annual conferences.

16. The United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities[7] provides Governments and non-

governmental organizations with monetary assistance for projects that focus on the well-being of families. Special attention is given to least developed countries and developing countries as well as countries in economic and social transition. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/142 of 17 December 1999, priority in the allocation of funds is given to catalytic and innovative activities related to families, and seed money is provided for national capacity-building and awareness-raising, as well as assessment and evaluation of strategies, policies and programmes.

17. Since September 2000, 13 project proposals have been submitted. The proposals relate to such issues as protection of children's rights, and care of orphans and the elderly. A proposal from the Government of Panama, funded in 2001, addressed the issue of extreme rural poverty by training family members to cooperate to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Working data compiled by the Division for Social Policy and Development within the Department indicate an estimated balance available for allotment as of 27 November 2001 of $293,586.[8]

18. The United Nations family programme web site is located at www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html. It is updated periodically and contains relevant United Nations resolutions, reports of the Secretary-General and substantive publications[9] that are issued by the Department. In addition, *Family Matters*, a bimonthly newsletter also found on the web site, provides current information about the preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary. A directory of national mechanisms on families will be prepared in 2004.

19. In 2001, the Secretariat supported worldwide observance of the International Day of Families (15 May) by preparing background information on the family for use by Governments, the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, and non-governmental organizations. The theme for 2001 was "Families and volunteers: building social cohesion", chosen to reflect the designation of 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. A message by the Secretary-General was issued for wide distribution, and the event was also celebrated at United Nations Headquarters. In the light of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the theme for the International Day of Families in 2002 will be "Families and Ageing: Opportunities and Challenges".

III. Basic approach to the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

20. Activities for the tenth anniversary are to be carried out in three phases: (a) the preparatory phase (2002-2003), to set up and mobilize organizational structures, identify priority issues, and focus on measures and activities to prepare for the observance; (b) the observance phase (2004), when activities will take place and initiatives planned by Governments will be undertaken to observe the anniversary; and (c) the follow-up phase, during which evaluation of progress made and obstacles encountered will be undertaken at all levels to ensure the successful implementation of International Year of the Family objectives, which is a continuous process.

21. Activities for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, prior to and during 2004, should be undertaken at all levels: national, regional and global. The primary focus will be on activities at the national and local levels. The actual year of observance will be 2004 and a variety of activities will be planned for the occasion.

A. National initiatives

22. National programmes are being implemented to support families in the discharge of their functions and promote the strengths of families, including their inherent capacity for self-reliance, and to stimulate self-sustaining activities on their behalf. National programmes should give expression to an integrated perspective of families, their members, their communities and society.

23. A wide spectrum of promotional and informational activities are proposed as an integral part of local and national-level activities. It is anticipated that the commencement of the tenth anniversary will be seen as an opportunity for advocacy and promotional efforts to achieve maximum visibility. Specific measures may include statements and speeches on the observance of the tenth anniversary by the head of State or Government, an announcement of policy and programme intentions on specific family issues, observance of a national family day or week, and festivals promoting the family.

24. Governments are being invited to establish a national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary to plan, stimulate and coordinate activities by appropriate governmental and non-governmental agencies. Such a committee would also help to assure the integration of family issues into overall national development planning. Close and effective coordination among the numerous actors involved is desirable throughout the process of policy formulation and implementation. Such coordination can be achieved through special institutional arrangements and procedures, which may take several forms, according to national political and administrative traditions and circumstances. The national coordinating committees or other coordinating bodies can serve as national focal points to liaise with the United Nations regarding the tenth anniversary. It is proposed that Governments establish national coordination committees or similar mechanisms on the tenth anniversary by early 2002 or soon thereafter, or entrust responsibility for preparations for the tenth anniversary to already existing bodies by that date. Governmental action is necessary in order to involve all sectors of society and elaborate specific programmes for the preparation of the tenth anniversary, in particular at the local level (see annex).

25. Governments may similarly consider preparing an agenda for national action for the tenth anniversary in which specific family needs would be identified and action programmes proposed for implementation by the end of 2002. National initiatives would be adopted by each Government within the broader framework of the strategy for the tenth anniversary.[10] The role of civil society is useful to recognize in this context, and its active participation can be a valuable aid to successful observation of the tenth anniversary.

B. Regional and global initiatives

26. The tenth anniversary may be the occasion to call for global and regional efforts to complement and support national and local-level actions. Effective and practical measures are to be identified and carried out at the global and regional levels to mark the observance. United Nations organizations and bodies, including the regional commissions, as well as research and academic institutions are expected to be actively involved in the preparatory process.

27. United Nations organizations and bodies are expected to give wide support to the tenth anniversary, especially when the topic is relevant to their current programmes. The agencies are encouraged to designate focal points for the tenth anniversary to consult regularly with the Programme on the Family of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the lead agency for the tenth anniversary.

IV. Summary and suggestions

28. The Department has begun the preparatory process for the tenth anniversary observance by disseminating information on its objectives and orientation, and by fostering collaboration. In the course of United Nations meetings, several Governments have already endorsed an active observance of the anniversary. These statements have encouraged the United Nations system to proceed with plans for its observance. Moreover, measures have been taken at the regional and international levels to carry out joint actions, encourage promotional and informational activities and focus attention on specific family issues. A number of intergovernmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations are already involved in the preparatory process. Research institutions are also being invited to participate in the observance. More efforts are still required and expected at all levels for successful preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary. In particular, the Department welcomes Member States' initiatives at local and national levels. The organizations of the United Nations system are expected to give wide support to the tenth anniversary, and especially to those aspects of particular relevance to their programmes. It is anticipated that non-governmental organizations will develop family-related activities and participate actively in preparations for the anniversary, thereby utilizing their extensive knowledge and experience in this field.

29. The following proposals are advanced:

(a) Governments may consider setting up national coordinating committees for the preparation and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004;

(b) Governments may consider promoting a public information campaign to broadcast the proclamation of the tenth anniversary of the

International Year of the Family and its objectives. Governments may wish to consider the designation of a national day, week, or month on the anniversary, and a national calendar of events on the family for 2002-2003 to promote information exchange and collaboration on research and other projects. They could also schedule events for the International Day of Families (15 May) in 2002 and 2003 in order to attract public attention to the pivotal role of families and their special needs;

(c) Governments may consider to supporting and extending the process of dialogue and communication with local and grass-roots groups and organizations, thereby encouraging active involvement in the design and implementation of projects and activities;

(d) Non-governmental organizations and institutions devoted to family issues, family-related research and family policy concerns could be provided with further opportunities to participate as partners in family-related work of the United Nations system in order to foster collaborative and supportive relationships with them;

(e) The regional commissions of the United Nations should be encouraged to play an active role in preparations for the anniversary by including in their work programme policy-oriented research, expert group meetings on family issues of relevance to the region, technical assistance programmes, development of inter-agency mechanisms at the regional level and intensified collaboration with the regional governmental and non-governmental organizations;

(f) Intergovernmental organizations within and outside the United Nations system with a strong substantive interest in family issues and the potential to contribute to the tenth anniversary could be encouraged to further review the influence of their activities on families, develop specific programmes and allocate resources to support local and national initiatives for the tenth anniversary;

(g) An information strategy for the tenth anniversary could be developed in cooperation with the Department of Public Information to draw attention to the contributions and needs of families and to mobilize efforts at all levels to promote the tenth anniversary;

(h) Contributions could be made to the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/124 of 17 December 1999 entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of the Family", in view of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004.

Notes

[1] Communications have been sent to Member States on a regular basis since 1999 informing them about deliberations of intergovernmental bodies, United Nations resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General concerning the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004.

[2] Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Cameroon, Chile, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

[3] Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Cape Verde, Comoros, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nepal, the Philippines, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and Venezuela.

[4] International Movement A.T.D. Fourth World; New York NGO Committee on the Family; Vienna NGO Committee on the Family; International Federation for Parent Education; Foundation for the Rights of the Family (PRODEFA); Parents Forum; Baha'i International Community.

[5] International Federation for Family Development, European Foundation Centre, Parenting Coalition International, Zonta International, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Organization for Early Childhood Education, World Movement of Mothers, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, Soroptomist International, Rotary International, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Federation for Parent Education, International Federation for Home Economics, International Council for Open and Distance Education, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Association of Lions Clubs, International Alliance of Women, Inter-American Organization for Higher Education, Forum for African Women Educationalists, European Council for Social Research on Latin America, and European Association for the Education of Adults.

[6] The National Council on Family Relations publishes two journals, sponsors an annual conference, promotes family life education and fosters dialogue among family professionals.

[7] Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/142 of 21 December 1995, the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family was renamed the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities.

[8] Unaudited accounts for the Biennium ended 27 November 2001: Schedules of Individual Trust Funds.

[9] *Technology and Its Impact on the Family* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.IV.6); *Families and the World of Work: Four Country Profiles of Family-Sensitive Policies* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.IV.5); and "Approaches to family policies: a profile of eight countries".

[10] E/CN.5/2001/4, paras. 17-19.

Annex

Guidelines for the establishment of a national coordinating committee

A. Nature and composition

In order to accomplish its objectives, a national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary would need to possess adequate political influence and high public visibility, possibly at the highest policy- and decision-making levels. It is encouraged to reflect the multidisciplinary nature of family issues and provide for intersectoral consultation, coordination and implementation, with adequate structural support. The committee may include representatives, as appropriate, of governmental and non-governmental organizations, associations, the private sector and individuals. Governments may wish to ensure that they are widely represented and enjoy appropriate status in the national coordinating committee for the tenth anniversary.

B. Objectives and functions

The overall aim and objective of a national coordinating committee is to promote and encourage family concerns and activities as an integral part of national development within the framework of the tenth anniversary. One of its main objectives is to achieve a coordinated and integrated approach to family-related issues.

The functions of a national coordinating committee can include the following:

(a) Identifying, monitoring and evaluating various governmental and non-governmental programmes of both direct and indirect concern to the family, in connection with the tenth anniversary;

(b) Providing an effective channel for the promotion of the tenth anniversary at the local and national levels;

(c) Elaborating and implementing a national programme of preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary in the form of an "agenda for national action";

(d) Reviewing and assessing the situation of the family, and identifying specific issues and problems;

(e) Sensitizing public opinion on family-related issues and problems and providing a leadership role in articulating family concerns;

(f) Monitoring and evaluating family policies and programmes;

(g) Promoting and undertaking research on the family and serving as a repository for national information and data relating to the family;

(h) Facilitating the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the preparations for and observance of the anniversary;

(i) Encouraging incorporation of family programmes into national development strategies.